



KATE ZAWALA / CITYLIFE

Storyteller Robin Nott gets kids on their feet with his storytelling skills on Aug. 3 outside the Kalamazoo Public Library's Washington Square Branch on Portage Street in Kalamazoo.



Daniel Holdridge, 13, and 2-year-old Tori Finley, of Kalamazoo, enjoy a song by storyteller Robin Nott at the library's Washington Square branch.

'Storytelling is not just stories and folk tales; it's the telling of our life stories.'

Robin Nott
Storyteller



Storyteller Robin Nott.

About the Weed and Seed Program

- For more information about the Edison Weed and Seed Program, contact Emilie Schada at 382-0916.
- For information regarding the U.S. Department of Justice Office of Justice Programs, contact the Executive Office for Weed and Seed at 810 Seventh Street NW, Washington, DC 20531.
- You may also call (202) 616-1152. Learn more about the national Weed and Seed programs at: www.ojp.usdoj.gov/eows/.



Children relax on the grass as they listen to storyteller Robin Nott tell his tales.

The Storyteller makes words come alive

By Sonya Bernard-Hollins
Special to CityLife

Despite the scream of an ambulance siren, the giggles of toddlers running barefoot through the lush grass and little girls springing out cartwheels, storyteller Robin Nott took more than 50 children and adults to another time and place.

As the sun began to duck behind a huge tree on the lawn at the Washington Square Branch of the Kalamazoo Public Library, all laughed about a princess who, in Nott's story, hadn't laughed in seven years.

Even grandparents shouted out the names of critters in a story accented with the country twang of Nott's guitar.

The program by Nott, an Augusta resident who teaches oral tradition at Gull Lake Community Schools, was part of an effort to get children of the Edison neighborhood excited about reading.

For six Wednesdays this summer, the Edison Weed and Seed program, in collaboration with the Washington Square Branch, hosted storytelling sessions. Children were given free books as re-

wards. The program concluded on Aug. 3 with Nott's storytelling session and an ice cream social.

Emilie Schada, coordinator of the Edison Weed and Seed program, said more than 200 neighborhoods across the country have formed such programs to weed out drugs, crime and other ills and to sow positive interaction and growth. The Edison Weed and Seed, formed in 2000, is the only program of its kind in Kalamazoo County, according to Schada. Weed and Seed programs are funded by the U.S. Department of Justice.

Nancy Davis Smith, a librarian at the Washington Square Branch, said this second year of the storytelling series has been the most successful.

Last year the sessions were held at different sites each week, but this year they were held at one location and attendance doubled, she said.

"Anytime you can get kids interested in reading over the summer, it's a plus for when they go back to school," she said.

Spanish-speaking mother Maria Guadalupe said through library interpreter Maria Fox that her two young daughters urged her to attend

the storytelling program with them.

"My girls were excited to come to the program. I think it's good to have something different for them to do besides sitting in front of the television," Guadalupe said.

Kurt Miedema and his wife, Karina, bring their two boys, Kris, 5, and Kyle, 2, to the library at least once a week. They said programs like the Weed and Seed sessions at Washington Square are a plus.

"We come here for books and videos, mostly," Kurt Miedema said. "This event was fun and entertaining and makes it more exciting to come to the library."

Through storytelling, Nott said he wants to excite people of all ages about telling stories and about tales and truth. It's something he's been doing since 1983.

"Oral tradition, and having that human contact as opposed to technological, is vital," Nott said. "Storytelling is not just stories and folk tales; it's the telling of our life stories."

"The chemistry found during the interaction of storytelling and children reading books is so important. That's why I do it," he said.